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# THE MONIST

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## ORMAZD, OR THE ANCIENT PERSIAN IDEA OF GOD.

Ahura Mazda, thou Spirit Most Holy,  
Creator of the Material world,  
Thou Righteous One !

THESE are the words in which Zoroaster, the Prophet of ancient Iran, was wont to pray to the Holy One of Persia, to the Lord God of Iran, as we read in the Avesta or ancient Sacred Books of the Parsis. It was this figure of Ahura Mazda, or Ormazd, that Zoroaster proclaimed to stand at the head of the host of heaven as supreme ruler over the great kingdom of good, of truth, of light, and as regent and sovereign above all peers. "A great god is Aura-mazda, the greatest of the gods" says King Darius also in the grand royal inscriptions on the rock at Behistan when he invokes blessings upon his people and gives thanks to Ormazd for all his mercies and kindnesses, in tones that resemble the fervor and dignity of the Psalmist chanting "the Lord is a great God, and a great king above all gods." Everywhere in the Zoroastrian scriptures the supremacy of Ahura Mazda is recognised and acknowledged ; everywhere in his names, titles, attributes and functions, there is evidence of the exalted idea which the Persians held of the majesty of this supermundane figure, of the purity of this transcendental divine being whom the Zoroastrian religion set up to be worshipped as god. So characteristic is this supreme

deity, that the religion itself is often called "Mazdaism" from Mazda's own name.<sup>1</sup>

The very lines of address to the deity, given above in the formulaic stanza that serves as text to open the discussion, show a certain ideality of thought that characterised the ancient Persian temperament. The Greeks, with their anthropomorphic notion of the pantheon of heaven, seem to have been struck by the spirituality and the immaterial nature of the Iranian conception of the god-head. Herodotus tells us that the Persians charge with folly those who erect statues or temples of the gods, "because they do not think the gods have human forms, as the Greeks do"; while ac-



Fig. 1. AHURA MAZDA.

(Conventional reproduction of the figure on the great rock inscription of Darius at Behistan.)

ording to Deinon, "they regard fire and water as the only images of the gods."<sup>2</sup> Plutarch best expresses the Zoroastrian idea of divinity when he says, in describing the nature of Ormazd, "among objects of sense he most of all resembles the light." Porphyrius adds of Ormazd, "his body is most nearly to be likened unto Light, his soul unto Truth."<sup>3</sup> From the Pahlavi books, or patristic literature of Sassanian times, which stand in the same relation to the

<sup>1</sup> For a brief and comprehensive sketch of the faith I would refer to a short article by the Editor, Dr. Carus, in *The Open Court*, March, 1897.

<sup>2</sup> Herod. I. 131 (and after him Strabo, *Geogr. Lib. xv*), Deinon, *Fragm.* (cited in Clemens Alex.).

<sup>3</sup> Plutarch, *de Is. et Osir.* c. 46; Porphyrius, *Vita Pythagorae*, 41.



Fig. 2. BAS-RELIEF OF PERSEPOLIS.

(After Flandin et Coste, *Perse Ancienne*, pl. 156. Reproduced from Lenormant, V, p. 485.)

Avesta as the Church Fathers stand to the Bible, we learn that it is in the majesty of the sacred flame that Aūharmazd reveals himself to the transported seers of Iran, just as Jehovah manifested himself in a great light to the prophets of old.<sup>1</sup> It must not be supposed, however, that the figure of the great Iranian god is absolutely free from all anthropomorphic traits. Such suggestions of anthropomorphism as are noticeable, and they are slight, will be discussed hereafter. But first we must look at the general attributes and functions of the Persian divinity.

*Ahura Mazda.* The name Ahura Mazda which always stands first in the formulaic address by the Prophet when he begins to commune with his god, is in itself an ideal title. It means the "Lord-Wisdom" (*Ahura-Mazda*). This "Sovereign Knowledge" universally appears as the chief characteristic of the Iranian deity. In a chapter of the Avestan ritual devoted to Ormazd and anticipating the thousand names of Allah, Ahura Mazda himself says: "my sixth name is Intelligence, my seventh name is the Intelligent. My eighth name is Knowledge, my ninth name is Endowed with Knowledge. I am the Sage by name; and I am by name the Sagest."<sup>2</sup> Everywhere in the Avesta, moreover, Ahura Mazda is represented as creating with "Intelligence"; whereas his antagonist Anra Mainyu creates with Ignorance. Ormazd is prescient, rich in wisdom, and omniscient; his opponent Ahriman is ignorant, lacking in knowledge, and endowed only with after-thought. The contrast between Ormazd and Ahriman, however, must remain to be discussed more fully upon some other occasion.

*Thou Spirit Most Holy.* These words of the address, "Spirit Most Holy," or "Spirit Most Beneficent," exhibit one of the most

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<sup>1</sup> Artā-Virāf, 101. 10-12; Zartusht Nāmah, p. 492, l. 35 (in Wilson's *Parsi Religion*).

<sup>2</sup> Avestan Yasht 1. 7, 15. The Avesta is easily accessible in translation by Darmesteter and Mills in the *Sacred Books of the East*, ed. F. Max Müller, vols. iv, xxiii, xxxi; or in the later French version by Darmesteter, *Le Zend Avesta* (Musée Guimet Series) 3. vols., Paris, 1892-1893; or again in German by F. Spiegel, and in French by C. de Harlez. The Pahlavi texts may be had in the translations by E. W. West, *Sacred Books of the East*, Vols. v, xviii, xxiv, xxxvii, xlvii.

characteristic attributes of Ahura Mazda as *Spenta Mainyu* or *Mainyu Spénishta*, the good spirit, opposed to the evil spirit *Anra Mainyu*.<sup>1</sup> And now we must philosophise for a moment, as we have before us a tenet which is as metaphysical as the Trinitarian doctrine in Christian theology.

The attribute Spenta Mainyu, as part of Ahura Mazda's personality, is in some instances, especially in the Gāthās or Zoroastrian Psalms, conceived of as an emanation from Ahura himself.<sup>2</sup> In such cases it comes to be regarded almost as a personal being that plays the rôle of intermediary, especially in creative activity, somewhat like Vohu Manah, or the archangel of Good Thought. This relation between Ahura Mazda and Spenta Mainyu in the Psalms of Zoroaster much resembles that of the Holy Ghost to the Father in the New Testament, because Spenta Mainyu, or the "Holy Spirit," is of the same substance with Ahura Mazda<sup>3</sup>; and, as we might naturally suppose, so subtle a distinction naturally gave rise to different views of interpretation in Zoroastrianism itself and to the varying dogmas of sects.

It was this sharp antithesis of Spenta Mainyu to Anra Mainyu which is present in the Zoroastrian Gāthās as the Parsis emphasise, that led still farther in later times to the separation of attribute and essence from the person. The sacred Pahlavi literature of the Sassanian period recognises the personification of the essence and spirit (the Pahlavi *Sp-nāk Mainōg*) conceived of as separate and apart from the Divine Being.<sup>4</sup> In fact there is just as much

<sup>1</sup> Some of the most specific passages in the Avesta are: Ys. 30. 5; Ys. 44. 7; Ys. 45. 2; Ys. 43. 5; Ys. 57. 17; Yt. 13. 13; Yt. 15. 3, 43, 44; Yt. 19. 44, 46; Vd. 1. 1 seq.; Ys. 1. 1; Pahlavi Būdahishn 1. 3-27. See also J. Darmesteter, *Ormazd et Ahriman*, p. 89-94, Paris, 1877.

<sup>2</sup> E. g.; Ys. 43. 2, 6; 45. 6; 47. 1, 5; 51. 7. See also Firoz Jamaspji's note in Casartelli, *Mazdayasnian Religion under the Sassanids*, Bombay, 1889, p. 17.

<sup>3</sup> The late lamented Darmesteter's views on the influence of the Logos doctrine upon the Avesta cannot be said to have met with any general favor among specialists. On somewhat similar lines, but earlier, Casartelli, compare *Mazdayasnian Religion*, tr. by Firoz Jamaspji, Bombay, 1889, p. 42 seq.

<sup>4</sup> Consult Casartelli, *Mazdayasnian Religion*, trans. by Firoz Jamaspji, pp. 17, 19, 57, with footnotes. See further West in *S. B. E.*, V., 112 note, 128 note 8.

evidence in Zoroastrianism of divergence in the lines of development on this point, with doctrinal differences and dogmatic variations, as there is a deviation in Christianity between Unitarianism and Trinitarianism. The modern Parsis have gone so far as to regard Ahura Mazda as comprising within himself both Spenta Mainyu and Anra Mainyu, as two spirits of opposite character, if not opposing nature, two principles, the good and the evil, two poles of the magnet, positive and negative.<sup>1</sup> This view is evidently recognised, together with other views, by Shahrastānī (A. D. 1086–1153), in his account of the sects and philosophical schools, when he states that the sect of the Gayomarthians maintain that the evil spirit Ahriman sprang from the good principle.<sup>2</sup> Haug most clearly presented the Parsi attitude when he sought to draw a distinction between Zoroaster's theology as monotheism and his speculative philosophy as dualism.<sup>3</sup> As a whole, however, the modern Parsi view, although it must command the most serious attention and investigation, seems to the present writer rather to be a later development, along more sharply defined lines, of what is only latent in the early times of the Gāthās. In other words, it appears to be a conception which has its origin perhaps in the growth of monotheistic tendencies and it appears to be due rather to the influences of certain older sects, than it seems to represent the original teaching of Zoroaster himself. Still, such a statement, although it represents a common view of the question, must be taken with reserve, for the Parsis strenuously maintain that foreigners misunderstand the standpoint of the Gāthās in this matter. Nevertheless, the direct opposition between Ormazd (Ὀρμαζδης) and Ahriman (Ἀρειμάνιος) as the good and the evil genius (δαίμων), or as two antagonistic principles

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<sup>1</sup> See the views of the Parsi authorities Firoz Jamaspji in Casartelli, *Mazdayasnian Religion*, p. 19 note; J. J. Modi, "The Religious System of the Parsees" in *The World's Parliament of Religions*, II., 900–902; N. F. Bilimoria, "Mazdaism" in *The Open Court*, XI., 377, June, 1897.

<sup>2</sup> See Haarbrücker's translation, I., 275 seq.; and compare Spiegel, *Erān. Alterthumskunde*, II., 187; Casartelli, *op. cit.*, 52 seq.; Gottheil, *References to Zoroaster*, p. 46 (Classical Studies in Honour of Henry Drisler, New York, 1894).

<sup>3</sup> Haug, *Essays on the Parsis*, 3d ed., pp. 300–304.

(ἀρχαί), is as old as Aristotle, if we may accept the authority of Diogenes Laertius.<sup>1</sup>

The attribute *Spenta Mainyu* has been translated above by "Holy Spirit." The English word *holy* (A. S. *hāl*) with all its comprehensive idea of absolute excellence, fulness, completion, finish, perfection, is not far remote in its original sense (cf. *whole*) from the Avestan *spenta*. The latter has as many cognates and derivatives in the Avesta as the English *holy* has in the Bible (cf. also Germ. *heil* and its kin), and like "holy" the word "spenta" is a

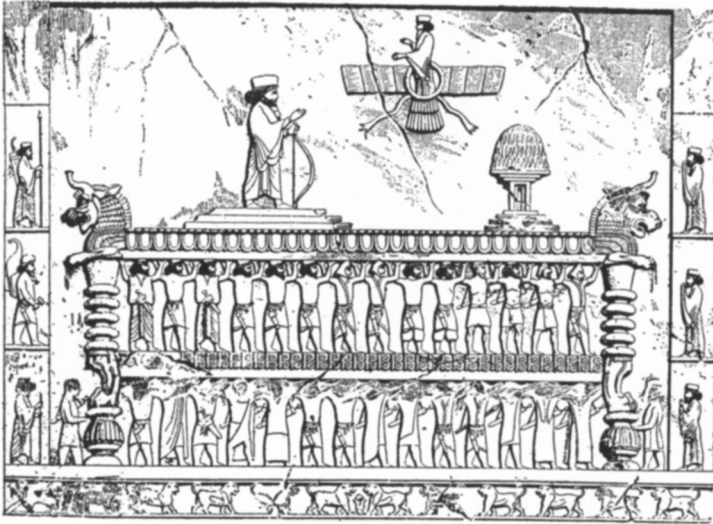


Fig. 3. SCULPTURES ON THE TOMB OF DARIUS.  
(Flandin et Coste, *Perse Ancienne*, at Persepolis, pl. 164. Lenormant, V., p. 23.)

great cardinal term in Zoroastrian theology. The true and fundamental idea of the Iranian word and its cognates is that of "growth increase, furtherance, progress, power, beneficence, perfection," which are synonyms with the Zoroastrian conception of holiness.<sup>2</sup>

As for *mainyu*, "spirit," it has been sufficiently shown above how ideal in its spirituality the Iranian conception of the godhead

<sup>1</sup> Diogenes Laertius, *de Vit. Philos.*, Proem. 8.

<sup>2</sup> The best discussion of the term is to be found in Darmesteter, *Ormazd et Ahriman*, p. 39, 89-92. For the development of meaning we may compare the etymological force of "august" (Lat., *augeo*).



really is. Attention has already been called to what the Greeks remarked on this subject. Herodotus emphasises that the Persians have no images of the gods because they do not believe, as the Greeks do, that the gods have "human forms." And when the Avesta speaks of Ahura Mazda as having a "body" (*kehrp*), we must remember that it is rather in the shape of the holy flame that he manifests his presence to mankind, or in the form of light, because "he wears the heaven as a robe."<sup>1</sup>



Fig. 4. SASSANIAN BAS-RELIEF. ORMAZD PRESENTS THE CROWN TO ARDASHIR.  
(From Curzon, *Persia*, II. p. 125.)

Nor is the sculptured rock at Behistan or the later Sassanian bas-reliefs a violation of the conception. King Darius in the great inscription evidently caused a representation of Aūra-mazda to be carved above his own portrait. This figure floats in a winged circle over the head of the king and presents to him a ring or symbol of sovereignty. See Fig. 3.

It has been supposed that this conventional figure represents

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Avesta, Ys. I. 1; Ys. 30. 5; Yt. 13. 3; and especially Ys. 36. 6.

rather the *fravashi* or idealised spirit of the king; but there can hardly remain any doubt that it represents Ormazd when we compare it with a passage in the Avesta (Vend. 2) and with similar representations of the godhead in Sassanian bas-reliefs, where a like figure is pictured at Naksh-i-Rūstam as presenting to the ruling monarch the emblem of sovereignty, and the name Ormazd is actually inscribed on the stone.<sup>1</sup> See Figs. 4, 8.

This conventional representation of Ormazd is not Iranian in origin nor by nature; it is borrowed from Assyrian or Babylonian art, as is generally acknowledged by scholars, and as is illustrated by the reproductions from an Assyrian cylinder and cameo, with a winged symbol of the divinity, on the next page. So special a representation of the deity on the Achæmenian trilingual inscriptions may have been designed by Darius for particular reasons. It is manifest throughout that he wishes to emphasise his divine right to the throne, and this plastic delineation of the divinity himself offering the sovereignty to the king, might well be calculated to appeal to the non-Persian conquered nations who were perhaps more anthropomorphic in their ideas. The later Sassanian bas-relief representation would simply be borrowed from the older Achæmenian sculptures or with the same intent. (See Fig. 8.) We may understand the situation better if we recall that mediæval Christian art did not shrink from representing the Deity as a bearded patriarch in flowing robes.

With regard, furthermore, to the theme under discussion, of Ahura Mazda as a spirit (*mainyu*), we may add that the purity and ideality of the conception is in no degree interfered with by the allusions to him in the Zoroastrian Psalms as "the father of Vohu Manah (archangel of Good Thought)," or again as "the father of Asha (Righteousness).<sup>2</sup> He is always represented as the creator of

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<sup>1</sup> See Edward Thomas, "Sassanian Inscriptions" in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, New Series, Vol. III., p. 269 and p. 267 note 3, London, 1868. K. D. Kiash, *Ancient Persian Sculptures*, p. 121; G. Rawlinson, *The Seventh Oriental Monarchy*, p. 606; Curzon, *Persia*, II., 125 (from which latter the above cut is reproduced).

<sup>2</sup> Ys. 31. 8; Ys. 45. 4; Ys. 44. 3; Ys. 47. 3.

the Archangels, or *Amesha Spentas* (Immortal Holy Ones). In the Yashts, or Avestan hymns of praise, he has *Ārmaiti* (Holy Harmony, goddess of the Earth) as daughter. The angel *Ashi Vanuhi* (Good Piety, and its resulting blessings) is their child; and this divine creature is a sister of the divinities *Sraosha*, *Rashnu*, and *Mithra* (Obedience, Justice, Truth), who rule as judges of the fate of the soul after death. The Fire (*Ātar*) is the son of *Ahura Mazda*; the



Fig. 5. ASSYRIAN CYLINDER.  
(British Museum. Lenormant, V., p. 234.)

waters are his spouses; and the Archangels or *Amesha Spentas*, as already noted, are his creation and his dependents.<sup>1</sup> Whatever may be the origin of these several abstractions, of these metaphorical and allegorical expressions, we are not to interpret them any differently from the manner in which we speak in Christianity of the



Fig. 6. AN ASSYRIAN  
CAMEO.<sup>2</sup>

“fatherhood of God,” the “fellowship of the Holy Spirit,” or the “bride of Christ.”

*Ahura Mazda as Creator.*—With the phrase “Creator of the material world,” in the formula of address above, we come to one of the most characteristic of all *Ahura Mazda*’s attributes,—the

<sup>1</sup> Yt. 17. 16; Ys. O. 2, etc.; Ys. 38. 1; Yt. 13. 83.

<sup>2</sup> In the Louvre in the Cabinet des Médailles. See Lenormant, V., p. 248. Compare the very similar Artaxerxes seal of Dieulafoy in *Harper’s Monthly Magazine*, LXXV. p. 3.

divine attribute of creative power. There is a noble "Psalm" (Gāthā) in which Zoroaster inquires into the nature and origin of creation, the maker of the sun, moon, and stars; of the earth and the sky; of the trees, winds, and mists; of the light and of darkness, morning and evening, wakefulness and slumber; and of the governing power that rules and directs the world; and, finally, in the confidence of his belief he rises to a grand climax as he bursts out into an exclamation calling upon "Thee, O, Mazda, the Creator of all through thy Holy Spirit."<sup>1</sup> In the Avestan prose "Seven Chapters," which can be but little later than the metrical Gāthās, Ahura Mazda is the creator of "all good things," including especially the animals, plants, the light and the earth.<sup>2</sup> In the opening



Fig. 7. ASSYRIAN CYLINDER.  
(Layard, *Culte de Mitra*, pl. xxx., No. 7. Lenormant, V., p. 248.)

paragraphs, moreover, of the Yasna, or celebration of worship, Ahura Mazda is invoked as "the Creator, radiant and glorious, most great and good, most fair, firm and wise, he who is most beautiful in form, who is supremest in Righteousness, sage and comforting, he, finally, who has created and fashioned us, he who has nourished us, he the Spirit Most Holy."<sup>3</sup> The attributes "created by Ahura," "made by Mazda" (*ahura-dhāta*, *mazda-dhāta*), which are applied to holy places and sacred things, are among the noblest attributes that can be bestowed. Ormazd's creation is

<sup>1</sup> Ys. 44. 3-7. This passage is especially cited in connexion with the idea of Spenta Mainyu.

<sup>2</sup> Ys. 37. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Translation of Ys. I. 1.

everywhere characterised as a creation of intelligence ; and his creative "Wisdom" (*khratu*) becomes glorified as a personified abstraction, as a separate individual.<sup>1</sup>

The same function as creator appears in the inscriptions of the ancient Persian Achæmenian kings, Darius, Xerxes, Artaxerxes, as they ascribe to Aura-mazda their creation, preservation, and all the blessing of their sovereignty in the words: "A great god is Aūra-mazda, who created this earth, who created yonder heaven, who created man, and created Peace for man, who made Darius (Xerxes, Artaxerxes) king, the one king over many, the one sovereign over many."<sup>2</sup> Throughout the Pahlavi patristic literature we find identical or similar expressions which are wholly in harmony with what has been said, as are the Greek passages, so far as they imply allusions to the subject.<sup>3</sup>

Whether the creation of Ormazd was a creation *ex nihilo*, or whether it was a shaping of pre-existing matter, belongs elsewhere to discuss.<sup>4</sup> A new investigation also is needed of the question as to how far, in the earliest Persian religious thought, Ahura Mazda was regarded as having created darkness or evil as in the well-known Isaiah allusion: "Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus . . . I form the light, and create darkness ; I make peace, and create evil ; I the Lord do all these things."<sup>5</sup> This much, however, may be stated off-hand, that in almost every passage in Iranian literature there is no question as to Ormazd's being the author and source of all that is good ; his creation is marred only by his adversary Ahriman as in the two familiar passages of the Vendidad and the Būdahishn.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. also Darmesteter, *Ormazd et Ahriman*, p. 26-27.

<sup>2</sup> Ancient Persian Inscriptions Dar, Elv. 1 (= O. 1).

<sup>3</sup> Phl. Būd. I. o *dātār* "creator"; and often.

<sup>4</sup> For some Avestan statistics on the subject see my notes in Peck's *Semitic Theory of Creation*, p. 25-26 (Chicago, 1886, Barclay, White & Co.), and also the remarks by Casartelli, *Mazdayasnian Philosophy*, p. 28. The subject needs a new investigation.

<sup>5</sup> The most recent remark on this much-discussed passage is by Spiegel, *Zeitschrift der deutschen Morg. Gesellschaft*, LII., 189.

<sup>6</sup> Vd. I. 1-20 ; Bd. I. 10-27. Translations may be found in the *Sacred Books of the East*.

*Thou Righteous One.* The true force of this final attribute "righteous" (*ashavan*), which sums up the formulaic address, can best be appreciated when we understand the significance of the original word *asha* "right, order, law, purity, righteousness," from which it is derived.<sup>1</sup> This is the same word as the Sanskrit *ṛta*, and it primitively denoted the order which pervades the world, the law in harmony with which men should live.<sup>2</sup> In the Avesta this concept becomes personified by Zoroaster as *Asha* "Law, Order, Righteousness," one of the seven Archangels or Immortal Holy Ones. Ahura Mazda, in the Zoroastrian Psalms, is "the father of Asha" and "the very founder of Righteousness";<sup>3</sup> or, in the words of the Christian writer Eusebius, who quotes from Zoroaster, Ormazd is the "father of law and of righteousness"—πατὴρ ἐννομίας καὶ δικαιοσύνης.<sup>4</sup> Throughout all the Pahlavi texts Aūharmazd maintains this position of righteous lord, the great upholder of that universal law and order which the world observes, the law which regulates all that is right.

*Other Attributes and Functions of Ahura Mazda.* From the Avesta, from the Ancient Persian Inscriptions, and from the Sassanian or Middle Persian writings, we may hastily present some of the epithets which have been gathered, and we may notice the other functions which Ormazd performs. He is not only a righteous creator but he is also the "keeper," "guardian," and "protector" of all his creatures to whom he is ever ready to lend his aid.<sup>5</sup> He is "watchful" and "infallible," and he is "not to be deceived" for he is "omniscient";<sup>6</sup> he is a giver of rewards and punishments,

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<sup>1</sup> The attribute *ashavan* is by no means confined to Ahura Mazda. Like the word "righteous" in the Bible, it is used of man as well as of God; and when it is applied to sacred things it means "holy, hallowed."

<sup>2</sup> See also Darmesteter, *Ormazd et Ahriman*, p. 7 seq., and Max Müller, *Hibbert Lectures*, 1878, pp. 249-253.

<sup>3</sup> Ys. 44. 3; Ys. 31. 7, 8.

<sup>4</sup> Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.*, I. 10.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Avesta, Yt. I. 13; Ys. 31. 13; Yt. I. 12; Ys. I. 1, and cf. especially Ys. 28. 11, and elsewhere in the Avesta. For the Anc. Pers. Inscriptions see Dar. Pers. d. 16 (= H. 16) *et passim*. The Pahlavi allusions also are numerous.

<sup>6</sup> Yt. I. 13-14; Ys. 45. 4; Yt. I. 7, 8, 12; Ys. 29. 4; Vd. 19. 20; Yt. 12. 1.

according to Zoroaster in the Gāthās<sup>1</sup>; and, furthermore, the great king Darius invokes God's wrath upon his enemies as well as his blessing upon himself.<sup>2</sup>

In Plutarch he is "the Lord Ormazd," in Xenophon he is "Zeus the King"; in the Avestan Gāthās Zoroaster prays to see his "kingdom," or empire, established upon earth.<sup>3</sup> Therefore "powerful, great, good, and royal" are among the many attributes which occur in the special chapter of the Avesta devoted to Ahura Mazda and his titles.<sup>4</sup> He is "immutable," or unchanging, and his existence is from eternity unto eternity.<sup>5</sup> His throne is in the heavens, in the abode of endless light.<sup>6</sup> Round about him stand ministering angels and archangels. These are the Amesha Spentas



Fig. 8. ORMAZD WITH THE CIRCLE OF SOVEREIGNTY  
AND THE SCEPTRE OF POWER.  
(From an Assyrian Bas-Relief.)

(Immortal Holy Ones) and the Yazatas (Worshipful Ones) who make up the celestial council.<sup>7</sup> They are ever ready to do his bid-

<sup>1</sup> Ys. 43. 4-5; cf. Ys. 47. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Anc. Pers. Inscr. Bh. 4. 73-80: Herodotus, 5. 105.

<sup>3</sup> Plutarch, *Alexander*, 30. 3, p. 257, ed. Tauchnitz, ὁ κύριος Ὀρομάσδης; Xen. *Cyrop.*, 3. 3. 21, ed. Breitenbach, p. 112, Δὲ βασιλεῖ; cf. Avestan, *kḥshathra*, "kingdom," *passim*.

<sup>4</sup> Yt. I. 7 seq.

<sup>5</sup> Ys. 31. 7; Phl. Dīnkarṭ (ed. Peshotan), Vol. iii. 130-132, cf. Casartelli, *Mazdayasnian Religion*, p. 24.

<sup>6</sup> Ys. 28. 5; Yt. 22. 15-17; Vd. 19. 30-32; Phl. Artā-Virāf, 10. 4; Mkh. 7. 11; Plutarch, *de Is. et Os.* 47.

<sup>7</sup> Hence probably *mazdāonhō* as plur., Ys. 30. 9; 31. 4; 45. 1; cf. Spiegel, *Comm. zum Av.*, ii. 181.

ding ; and through these as his agents his beneficent works are shown or his mercy is manifested to men.<sup>1</sup> His sovereignty is undisputed save by the Evil Spirit ; and when we find in the Avesta in one or two sporadic instances, this or that angel or minor divinity apparently exalted for the moment to be his peer,<sup>2</sup> we may judge that this is a mere phase of kathenotheism in the Yashts, and due either to a survival from an older pantheistic view, or to a Zoroastrian concession which may be made in recognition of some trait that belonged to an earlier stage of the faith. At all events they do not mar the picture, but serve rather to show the harmony that reigns in the heavenly hierarchy, and they detract in no wise from the true exaltation of Ormazd as "the great god, the greatest of the gods," as he is called in the Achæmenian inscriptions.

Such a Being is well "worthy of worship" as Zoroaster himself exclaims in the Gāthā-Psalms<sup>3</sup>; and, to quote from the Church Father, Eusebius, who, on the authority of Osthanes, claims that they are Zoroaster's own words, we may well cite a description which portrays the Magian idea of god as a being who is "the first, the imperishable, the invisible ; unbegotten and elemental<sup>4</sup>; the incomparable one, the ruler of everything beautiful ; the incorruptible ; best among the good, sage among the sagest ; the father of law and of righteousness ; self taught ; of his own nature and substance (i. e., *φυσικός*) ; perfect and wise ; the sole devisor of the holy order of nature."<sup>5</sup>

*Certain Mythological Traits, or Traces of Old Survivals.* Every religion shows traces of older survivals, or a lingering tinge of na-

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<sup>1</sup> Ys. 29. 1 ; Ys. 33. 11 (mercy) ; Yt. 19. 46 seq. ; Phl. Yōsht-ī-Fryānō, 2. 57 ; Gt. Iran. Bund. (see Darmesteter, *Le Z. A.* ii. 305-322).

<sup>2</sup> Yt. 5. 17 ; Yt. 8. 25 ; Yt. 10. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Ys. 31. 8.

<sup>4</sup> Lit. "without parts."

<sup>5</sup> Euseb., *Praep. Evang.*, I. 10, cf. Kleuker, *Anh. zum Zend Avesta*, Bd. ii., Thl. 3, p. 125, and Jackson, *Zoroaster the Prophet of Ancient Iran*, Appendix V. § 18. In the magnificent folio of fifteenth century drawings in the British Museum, recently issued by Mr. Quaritch and entitled *A Florentine Picture Chronicle*, besides a picture purported to represent Zoroaster, there is also one number (No. 49) "Oromasdes raising the Dead."



ture worship, in its conception of the deity. The Psalmist's grand image of the divinity that rides upon the wings of the wind, with clouds and darkness beneath his feet, and with darkness and lightnings around his throne, or, again, who makes the heaven his seat and the earth his footstool, is a picture not free from naturalistic touches. Zoroastrianism cannot be expected to be more exempt than Judaism from preserving some traces of an original identity of the god idea with the sky.<sup>1</sup> Search in the Iranian scriptures will reveal the presence of certain physical traits in the notion of god-head which survive from an older stage of the religion and represent a more material and concrete conception than the spiritual and abstract idea described. We ourselves know how to judge of these.

The prayer to the father "in heaven" is as old as religion itself. God dwells in the sky and sometimes he is one with the sky. When Herodotus says the Persians "call the whole circle of the heaven Zeus," or when Darius invokes Zeus (i. e., Ormazd) as he launches the arrow skyward and vows vengeance against the Athenians, we see in these instances merely an evidence of what belongs alike to every religion, to every race and clime. Allusion has already been made above to such lingering touches of an original stage of nature worship or to mythological traces which may still be recognised in the figure of Ormazd.

Darmesteter has especially called attention also to certain points of likeness between Ahura Mazda and the divinity of the sky, if not of the waters, Varuna, in India.<sup>2</sup> These may be regarded as traits that have been preserved from a common Indo-Iranian or proto-Aryan period. But after all, the resemblances are subordinate in comparison to the individuality and originality of the Persian conception of the godhead; and they fade into the background when the figure of Ahura Mazda is viewed in its full light. How different, moreover, the fate of the Indian divinity was in contrast to the Iranian deity, may be judged from history. India's ancient

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Cornill, *The Prophets of Israel*, pp. 20-21.

<sup>2</sup> Darmesteter, *Ormazd et Ahriman*, Paris, 1877.

divinity Varuna sank more and more into the shadow and grew dimmer and dimmer in outline. Persia's divine being advances more and more into the light, rising higher and higher as time goes on, and is transfigured under the idealistic touch of Zoroaster until it stands forth with an effulgence so brilliant as to render Mazdaism, or the religion of Mazda, almost monotheistic in its character because of this exaltation of the single Supreme Being.

*Summary and Conclusion.* Zoroastrianism, and the religion of Ancient Persia, presents us with a strikingly ideal conception of the godhead. In its purity and spirituality the figure possesses an individuality, elevation and loftiness that is not to be paralleled in the ancient religion of Greece, of Rome, of India. The gods of the Greek and Roman pantheon, with their human forms, their human passions, their human failings, can offer no likeness to the Lord God of Iran with his heavenly host of angels and archangels. Nor can the frenzied Indra, exhilarated by copious draughts of intoxicating *soma* and accompanied by the warring elements of the storm, afford a parallel. No, nor the pale and colorless Brahma, nor that vague Nirvāna or state into which the faithful follower of Buddha sinks back or is re-absorbed. No, none of these present a true match for such a conception of the Supreme Being as Zoroaster taught. The majesty of the kingly figure of Ahura Mazda in the Avesta, in the Achæmenian inscriptions, in the Pahlavi literature of Sassanian times—this truly characteristic production of Zoroaster's spirit—finds its parallel and superior in Sacred Scripture alone. The concept of Ormazd, however, in its purity, its ideality, its dignity, can offer a fair comparison to the flaming majesty of the Holy One of Israel, the God of truth, of justice, of power and of wrath, or to the Being who, in our Saviour's teaching, is more especially the God also of love, of goodness and mercy—the Father in Heaven in whom we believe and place our trust.

In one point, however, the god of ancient Persia strikingly differs from the God of Israel. This is in the attribute of Omnipotence. Ahura Mazda, although omnipresent and omniscient, is nevertheless not omnipotent; his power is ever limited, hampered, confined, by that self-existent, coeval, but not co-eternal, rival—

Anra Mainyu. "May Ahura Mazda rule at will over his creatures"—rule at will, as shall be when the millennium comes—this is the constant prayer of the pious Zoroastrian. But a fuller discussion of this point and of the resemblances between Ormazd and Jehovah, must remain for another occasion.

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